

EMBASSY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

PUBLIC AFFAIRS SECTION

TEL: 880-2-883-7150-4

FAX: 880-2-9881677, 9885688

E-MAIL: DhakaPA@state.gov

WEBSITE: <http://dhaka.usembassy.gov>



PRESS RELEASE

AMBASSADOR MORIARTY INAUGURATES CYCLONE RECONSTRUCTION PROGRAM IN BARISAL

BARISAL, APRIL 25 -- United States Ambassador to Bangladesh, James F. Moriarty, and Bangladesh Minister of Agriculture, Begum Matia Chowdhury, inaugurated a U.S. Government-funded Sidr reconstruction project today in Barisal. The Improved Livelihood for Sidr-Affected Rice Farmers project marks the beginning of an \$80 million U.S. Government reconstruction effort in response to Cyclone Sidr. This \$4.77 million program will help restore agricultural production in the Sidr-affected rice producing districts of Bangladesh. The Bangladesh Department of Agricultural Extension is collaborating with the U.S. Government to implement the project.

The U.S. Government, through USAID, is supporting activities in the eight most Sidr-affected areas to improve rice production by using Urea Deep Placement technology. By improving nitrogen efficiency, this technology increases rice crop yields by as much as 25%. This will increase the net income of each of the project's 280,000 beneficiary families by \$80 per harvest, \$22 million in 2009 alone. Using the Urea Deep Placement technology, the project will also save approximately 13,000 metric tons of fertilizer and increase rice production by about 74,000 metric tons by the end of the project in 2010. This program will benefit more than 1.4 million people in 35 upazilas across the Sidr-affected region.

Following the launch, Ambassador Moriarty and Begum Matia Chowdhury met with Sidr-affected farmers in the area. They also inaugurated the operation of a urea briquette machine used in the new technology to transform commercially available urea fertilizer into larger granules that result in higher yields. Briquette machines will also generate additional income opportunities for Sidr-affected people living in the Barisal region. The U.S. Government has already funded around 600 briquette machines across Bangladesh, providing income opportunities for more than 400,000 people.

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Note: A Bangla translation of this press release is also available at the American Center. If you are interested in the translation, please call the American Center Press Section, Tel: 8837150-4, Fax: 9885688; e-mail: DhakaPA@state.gov; Website: <http://dhaka.usembassy.gov>